

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

TREON D VAUGHN,

Plaintiff,

v.

Case No. 17-C-436

T. DICKMAN, WARDEN GARY BOUGHTON,
and ELLEN RAY,

Defendants.

SCREENING ORDER

Plaintiff Treon Vaughn, who is incarcerated at Kenosha County Detention Center, filed a pro se complaint under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, alleging that his civil rights were violated. This matter comes before the court on the plaintiff's petition to proceed *in forma pauperis*.

The plaintiff is required to pay the statutory filing fee of \$350.00 for this action. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). If a prisoner does not have the money to pay the filing fee, he or she can request leave to proceed *in forma pauperis*. The plaintiff has filed a certified copy of his prison trust account statement for the two-month period immediately preceding the filing of his complaint. The plaintiff has been assessed an initial partial filing fee of \$17.65 in this action, but he indicates he is unable to pay that fee and requests that fee be waived. It appears the prisoner will be unable to pay the initial partial filing fee, and so it is waived. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(4).

The court is required to screen complaints brought by prisoners seeking relief against a governmental entity or officer or employee of a governmental entity. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a). The court must dismiss a complaint or portion thereof if the prisoner has raised claims that are legally

"frivolous or malicious," that fail to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or that seek monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b).

A claim is legally frivolous when it lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact. *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 31 (1992); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989); *Hutchinson ex rel. Baker v. Spink*, 126 F.3d 895, 900 (7th Cir. 1997). The court may, therefore, dismiss a claim as frivolous where it is based on an indisputably meritless legal theory or where the factual contentions are clearly baseless. *Neitzke*, 490 U.S. at 327. "Malicious," although sometimes treated as a synonym for "frivolous," "is more usefully construed as intended to harass." *Lindell v. McCallum*, 352 F.3d 1107, 1109-10 (7th Cir. 2003) (citations omitted).

To state a cognizable claim under the federal notice pleading system, the plaintiff is required to provide a "short and plain statement of the claim showing that he is entitled to relief[.]" Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). It is not necessary for the plaintiff to plead specific facts and his statement need only "give the defendant fair notice of what the . . . claim is and the grounds upon which it rests." *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007) (quoting *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 47 (1957)). However, a complaint that offers "labels and conclusions" or "formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do." *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555). To state a claim, a complaint must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, "that is plausible on its face." *Id.* (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570). "A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged." *Id.* (citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 556). The complaint allegations "must be enough to raise a right to relief above the speculative level." *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555 (citation omitted).

To state a claim for relief under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, a plaintiff must allege that: 1) he was deprived of a right secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States; and 2) the deprivation was visited upon him by a person or persons acting under color of state law. *Buchanan-Moore v. County of Milwaukee*, 570 F.3d 824, 827 (7th Cir. 2009) (citing *Kramer v. Village of North Fond du Lac*, 384 F.3d 856, 861 (7th Cir. 2004)); *see also Gomez v. Toledo*, 446 U.S. 635, 640 (1980). The court is obliged to give the plaintiff's *pro se* allegations, "however inartfully pleaded," a liberal construction. *See Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007) (quoting *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 106 (1976)).

Vaughn alleges that Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) employees T. Dickman, Gary Boughton, and Ellen Ray failed to provide a copy of his six month certified inmate trust account statement to the United States District Court for the Eastern District for three of his cases: 16-C-1486, 16-C-1499, and 16-C-1557. He claims the defendants stated they would provide Vaughn his trust account statement, but did not because they wanted to "protect their interest." He asserts that defendants' actions amounted to "retaliation through deception." Vaughn seeks both monetary and injunctive relief.

To prevail on a retaliation claim, a plaintiff must show that (1) he engaged in activity protected by the First Amendment; (2) he suffered a deprivation that would likely deter First Amendment activity in the future; and (3) the First Amendment activity was "at least a motivating factor" in the Defendants' decision to take the retaliatory action. *Bridges v. Gilbert*, 557 F.3d 541, 546 (7th Cir. 2009). Even construing his allegations liberally, Vaughn has failed to state a claim for retaliation. His complaint is nothing more than a series of conclusory allegations, with no information as to why defendants would be retaliating against him or that defendants had control

over his trust account statements. It is also unclear whether Vaughn has even suffered harm—a review of Case Nos. 16-C-1486, 16-C-1499, and 16-C-1557 reveals that the dismissals were without prejudice. Vaughn also does not allege that any injury is ongoing and has provided a copy of his trust account in this case. Accordingly, Vaughn’s retaliation claim will be dismissed for failure to state a claim although the dismissal will be without prejudice.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that plaintiff’s request to proceed *in forma pauperis* is **GRANTED**.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this action is **DISMISSED** without prejudice.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Clerk of Court enter judgment accordingly.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Kenosha County Sheriff or his designee shall collect from the plaintiff’s prison trust account the \$350.00 balance of the filing fee by collecting monthly payments from the plaintiff’s prison trust account in an amount equal to 20% of the preceding month’s income credited to the prisoner’s trust account and forwarding payments to the clerk of the court each time the amount in the account exceeds \$10 in accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). The payments shall be clearly identified by the case name and number assigned to this action.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that copies of this order be sent to the Kenosha County Sheriff.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that any appeal from this matter would not be taken in good faith pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3) unless the plaintiff offers bonafide arguments supporting his appeal.

Dated this 21st day of April, 2017.

s/ William C. Griesbach

William C. Griesbach, Chief Judge
United States District Court